



CAREER EPIDEMIOLOGY FIELD OFFICERS

WHAT IS THE PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE?

- The nation has a growing need for trained epidemiologists to address current public health problems, as well as problems with emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases.
- As the events of fall 2001 have demonstrated, the nation needs “rapid response” capabilities to meet the real and ongoing threats of terrorism and bioterrorism.
- CDC needs an available cadre of trained epidemiologists to ensure frontline protection of the public’s health.

WHAT HAS CDC ACCOMPLISHED?

In response to the HHS Secretary’s conviction that CDC should assign an Epidemic Intelligence Service (EIS) officer or EIS graduate to every state, CDC created the Career Epidemiology Field Officer (CEFO) Program to compliment the EIS program. The goal of this program is to develop a national cadre of EIS-trained CEFOs who will work with states and large local health departments to build epidemiologic and emergency response capacity. Twelve CDC CEFOs are currently assigned to various locales across the country; these officers are on the ground, familiar with the local landscape, and ready to respond to any public health emergency, especially those relating to terrorism. The CEFOs’ activities include

- Giving epidemiologic expertise to state terrorism preparedness and emergency response planning and policy.
- Providing leadership, training, planning, and technical support for building local epidemiologic capacity.
- Building partnerships with state and local agencies responsible for terrorism preparedness and emergency response activities.
- Recruiting and supervising new epidemiologists, including EIS officers.

Examples of Program in Action

- During the West Nile virus epidemic in fall 2002, a CEFO led the development of virus surveillance of mosquitoes, dead birds, and humans.
- Several CEFOs have helped their health departments develop and write response plans for smallpox and other threats; several CEFOs are emergency response team members.
- One CEFO assigned to a county health department has partnered with a local school of public health to develop bioterrorism training for district health officers, hospital employees, and medical and public health educational institutions.

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

Gaps in state and local epidemiologic and emergency response capacity will continue to be filled by the assignment of CEFOs. CEFOs will receive important training in terrorism preparedness and emergency response activities; syndromic and terrorism-related surveillance; and secure communications.

For additional information on this or other CDC programs, visit www.cdc.gov/program

January 2004